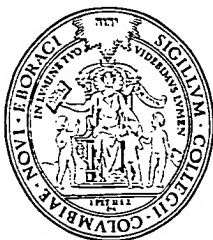


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THE
TRUE INTEREST
OF
GREAT BRITAIN, &c.

[Price One Shilling.]

THE

TRUE INTEREST

OF

GREAT BRITAIN,

WITH RESPECT TO HER

AMERICAN COLONIES,

Stated and Impartially Considered.

By a MERCHANT of LONDON.

Disfat, sumasne prudenter.
An rapias. HOR.

L O N D O N,

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, in *Ludgate-Street*.

M,DCC,LXVI.

ERRATA.

- Page 18, line 20, for *without*, read *unless*.
P. 28, in the note, for p. 16, read p. 36.
P. 33, l. 4, dele comma after *were*.
P. 37, l. 10, dele *but*.
P. 40, l. 22, for *will*, r. *would*.
P. 40, l. 24, for *will*, read *would*.
P. 45, l. 11, after *kind*, insert *of*.
P. 49, l. 5, after *pence*, insert *currency*, for 100l.

THE
TRUE INTEREST
OF
GREAT BRITAIN, &c.

THE behaviour of the colonies in North America, on account of the late act of parliament, commonly called the Stamp-act, seems to be of so extraordinary a nature, as to demand the most immediate and attentive consideration of the legislature. The author hopes, therefore, any attempt to investigate the causes of the conduct the Americans have pursued, will not be received with displeasure by the public; and if any hints in the course of it be found useful, he flatters himself, whatever imperfections and improprieties may be observed in it, will be pardoned, as not intended to mislead? he will with readiness receive the correction of candor, and own his mistakes

the moment they shall be pointed out to him.

The importance of the American colonies to Great Britain, seems to be so well understood, that it would be mispending time to endeavour to convince any body of a truth which is universally acknowledged; but it may not be improper, for the information of those who only consider the fact as indisputable in general, without being acquainted with the particular advantages resulting from the several different parts of that immense territory to Great Britain, if a short account be given of the nature of the traffic carried on by the colonies, on the continent in particular, and the grievances they have of late complained of; and which, perhaps, may be found to be the occasion of the late disturbances. I shall be easily pardoned for saying no more of the trade of the islands than is absolutely necessary, on account of their connection with the continent; their interest with respect to the mother-country having already been pointed out by many abler pens than mine, and being at present perfectly well understood.

North

North America, in the point of view in which I am desirous of considering it at present, ought to be divided into three parts, North, Midland, and South. The first comprehending all the country north of the Jerseys; the second, the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina; and the third consisting of South Carolina and all those countries which we are in possession of to the southward.

The whole of this immense region, whose boundaries to the westward have not hitherto been ascertained) extends from the 50th to the 25th degree of north latitude; and consequently the temperature of the air, and quality of the soil, must be extremely different in different parts of it. In the first division are produced excellent masts, and other timber; the animals furnish us with plenty of very rich furs, and the seas and rivers abound with prodigious quantities of fish, both of the greater and lesser kinds. The midland parts produce tobacco, all kinds of corn, grain, and pulse; live cattle of all sorts, both for burthen and provisions; the country abounds in iron and copper mines; and, if the inhabitants can be induced to make

the attempt, there is not the least doubt but the best of wines may be produced in a country, where most delicious grapes grow wild on vines of a size hardly to be credited by those who have not been eye-witnesses of the fact.

The third, or southern division, is capable of producing silk, coffee, cacao, cochineal, indigo, cotton, rice, olives, fruit and wine; and there are some articles common to each division, viz. hemp, flax, naval stores, peltry, pot-ash, and lumber.

The exports of the northern provinces, to Great Britain, consist of spermaceti and train oils, fish, furs, masts, ships, and some articles of lesser consequence. The greatest part indeed of the fish which are taken, are immediately carried to foreign markets; but the remittances made for that article to Great Britain, upon a moderate computation, are supposed to be not less than 300,000*l.* annually. Many of the ships built in North America are sold to foreigners, which is another means of bringing a large sum of money into the kingdom. Provisions, the most staple commodities of the countries immediately south-

southward of those last-mentioned, are likewise exported to advantage to foreigners, and the greatest part of their produce visits Great Britain in specie. Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina, in the single article of tobacco*, produce the sum of 500,000*l.* sterling, at least, from France, Germany, Flanders, Italy, and other parts of Europe. — The provinces of South Carolina and Georgia are of no small advantage to us: we are now in a great measure supplied from thence with our indigo: Europe has very little rice which is not brought to it from those colonies; and the large sums of money which we pay to France, Spain, Italy, Turkey and China, for silks, both raw and wrought, will be saved, if the southern provinces are properly encouraged to raise that article, and their value be almost inestimable.—Such are the exports of North America to Eu-

* I do not here take any notice of the great advantage the revenue receives from the duty paid on tobacco consumed here, because I consider the money as raised upon the consumers in England; but I only beg leave just to put the reader in mind that it is principally consumed by labourers and mechanics, who are enabled to purchase great part of it by the colonists purchasing the produce of their labours.

rope ; and, in return for them, they receive from Great Britain not only every necessary (except provisions) but almost every luxury of life. In order to pay for which, they send the whole produce of their land, which will find a sale with us ; but as that is much insufficient for that purpose, they also send every thing else, which is the production of their country, to every place we will permit them to traffick, in order, thereby, to enable them to make up the deficiency, but in vain ; they continually are in arrear to us, and and ever will be so, while such immense tracts of fine land tempt the possessors of those which are adjoining to them to make new settlements, the effecting which will ever keep them from amassing other riches, and be a continual source of wealth to these kingdoms, as it insures us a constant supply of raw materials, and an increasing market to return them to, when wrought up.

This short view of the nature of our trade with the North American colonies sufficiently points out from whence we are enabled to support that burthen of taxes
which

which our very existence, as a free people, obliges us to raise, in order to put ourselves upon a respectable footing in Europe, and to empower us to afford our colonies that protection and liberty they have so lately experienced, and still continue to enjoy. But, while we are straining every sinew in order to make that protection effectual, and that liberty permanent, it is not to be wondered at that we call upon them to sustain a part of that weight with which we are oppressed. The chief question is, whether the share laid upon them be too great, or whether it is not rather injudiciously placed?

It is apparent, from what has been before said of the produce and imports of North America, that they have not endeavoured to enter into any kind of cultivation which will be prejudicial to the produce or manufactures of Great Britain; but let it not be from thence imagined, that it is not in their power: no person, who is the least acquainted with North America, but must be sensible, that the wool of their sheep is as well adapted for all the uses to which it is applied in England, as any

in the world *. The only method to prevent their making any attempts of that kind, is, by encouraging them to turn their force to other objects, which we cannot so properly attend to, and making it as much their interest as ours, to seek a different employment from that of their fellow subjects in England. In order to do this, it is most certainly sound policy to make every thing, demanded by them from Great Britain, come to their hands as cheap as possible ; as thereby every temptation will be removed to their endeavouring to produce, or make it amongst themselves ; and every facility ought also to be

* About thirty years ago, when the produce of the tobacco colonies was at a very low price, the distress of the inhabitants obliged them to manufacture great part of their own wool, cotton, and flax ; and there are merchants now in England, who remember most of the common people of those provinces clothed in the cloth and linen manufactured amongst themselves. No longer ago than the year 1757, the same happened again in the province of Virginia, where it was disgraceful for a gentleman not to appear in a cotton coat made in his own family.—As soon however as the price of their commodities rose in Europe, they immediately sent home, (for such is the tender appellation Great Britain is known by in the colonies,) for all those articles which a necessary æconomy obliged them before to make for themselves.

given

given to their exports, in order to enable them to pay for what they receive from us. If I am right, in this principle, there has certainly been a mistake committed in the late regulation, which directs the additional sums to be retained on the India goods, and German linens, exported to the colonies ; as it obliges them to pay more money for the same goods than they used to do ; which not being in their power, must, of consequence, prevent their demanding so large a quantity ; by which means the nation loses, without the revenue being benefited. It is not only from this additional duty, that the American colonies are hurt, but they are prevented also from receiving slaves at so cheap a rate as heretofore ; for in order to prevent the goods, which on exportation are to leave this additional part of the duty, charged on them at importation, from being clandestinely reimported, a new difficulty has been thrown in the way of the merchant trading to Africa, who is obliged to cancel his bond, given for the exportation of sundry sorts of India goods necessary for the trade of that quarter of the world, within

within eighteen months after the date thereof ; by the oath of the master of the ship, who probably may not be able to finish his voyage in two years, as it often happens, (particularly upon the Gold Coast) that ships lay seven, eight, and even twelve months, before they are compleatly flaved. The restriction, last-mentioned, has given so much uneasiness to many principal merchants trading to Africa, as well as to the gentlemen who are concerned in supplying such merchants with the India goods, for which such bond must be given ; that the first difficulty they are brought into by it, will probably force them to quit the business ; and the loss of our African trade may be the fatal consequence.

The obliging the Americans to pay more for the goods they receive from us, than heretofore, is not all that they have reason to complain of ; we have done our endeavour, to prevent their being able to pay for them at all, by stopping the export to strangers of great part of their produce, which we cannot receive from them ourselves, thereby preventing them from taking such

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commodities, in payment for it, as they were accustomed to do, and which they might advantageously send to Europe; this we have done, by laying such a tax upon them as amounts to a prohibition: thus the following goods cannot be imported into North America without paying

Foreign Sugar	-	£.	1	2	0	per cwt.
Coffee	-	-	2	19	9	per cwt.
Indico	-	-	0	0	6	per lb.

The duty of foreign molasses, is indeed reduced to three-pence per gallon; but I doubt whether any great advantages have resulted from this alteration.

I am well aware, I shall be told, that such tax upon the importation of the articles above-mentioned, from the foreign American Islands to our settlements in North America, has been imposed in order to the advantage and emolument of our own islands, and not with any view to raise money upon the North Americans.

I have too great a regard for the islanders, as fellow-subjects, to wish North America any advantages at their expence; but I have also the same regard for the inhabitants of North America; and cannot
without

without concern, see laws made to the prejudice of the latter, which are not only of no advantage to the islands, but manifestly prejudicial to the interest, both of North America and Great Britain : such must every law be, which prevents the export of those commodities from N. America to strangers, which cannot be exported by them to advantage to G. Britain, or the British American islands, or of which they have more than either, or both the last-mentioned countries can purchase from them ; except the goods received in payment, should be such as manifestly tend to destroy the trade of some other part of the British empire ; the contrary of which, I hope to be able to prove, will be the case with respect to the articles above-mentioned, of sugar, coffee and indigo.

The forests of North America afford such an inexhaustible fund of lumber, that the inhabitants are able to supply not only our islands, but the whole world, with it ; and therefore a freedom of exportation ought to be permitted, not only to the American, French and Spanish islands, but

but also to Europe*. Flour, corn, horses, rice, and such other produce, as North America abounds with, ought also to be permitted a freedom of export to such of the islands of America (not subject to Great Britain) as shall be in want of, or willing to receive the same. Some people, indeed, are of opinion, with respect to the latter, that they ought not to be permitted to receive any thing, in payment, but cash; (for there are many object to their being allowed to import foreign molasses;) but I hope I shall have no great difficulty in shewing that such opinion is very erroneous: It must arise from one or other of these two reasons; either, that the payment to the North Americans of such commodities, injures our own islands, by

* Staves and heading, for the making of Casks, are much demanded at Bourdeaux, Porto, Lisbon, &c. but the colonies, from whence those articles can be exported of the best quality, and at the cheapest rate, are not only prohibited carrying them to those markets, in common with the rest of North America, but if that prohibition should be taken off, they are deprived of the advantage of any back freight, as they are not allowed to carry back even a load of salt, to cure their provisions with; nor are they permitted to load wine from Porto or Lisbon, or any part of the Spanish dominions, or even from the Canary islands.

making

making their produce ^xof less value, or, that it is much to the advantage of our rivals, in trade, to permit them such an opportunity of vending theirs; without which, they could not cultivate their lands; or if they did cultivate them, it would be at so great a disadvantage, as to give our sugar colonies a great superiority over them.

It was, I believe, upon a supposition the former objection was well founded, that the restriction complained of was laid upon the North American commerce: I dare say the question has been very maturely considered, and I therefore am fearful of being thought too hardy in asserting, that the fact would not prove so; but this I am sure of, a remedy would be very easily found, and might as easily be applied; though I own myself of opinion, such commerce between North America and the French and Spanish islands would in no wise affect the price of such commodities (either in our own islands or in Europe.)

It has been asserted, that the British islands in America do not produce sugar sufficient to supply the demands of the British subjects; and as a proof of it, an account
of

of imports and exports has been produced from the Custom-house books for ten years, from 1745 to 1755*, the latest period that can with any propriety be pitched upon, as ever since the year 1755, there is no pos-

* An account of the raw sugar imported from Christmas 1745, to Christmas 1755, distinguishing each year.

	C.	qr.	lb.
To Christmas 1746 —	753,449	0	17
1747 —	608,462	2	14
1748 —	981,449	1	6
1749 —	933,296	2	5
1750 —	914,044	2	23
1751 —	825,947	1	27
1752 —	837,083	0	5
1753 —	1,117,939	3	1
1754 —	859,131	2	12
1755 —	1,177,369	0	25
<hr/>			
	9,008,173	1	3

An account of the quantity of raw sugar exported from Christmas 1745 to Christmas 1755, distinguishing each year.

	C.	qr.	lb.
To Christmas 1746 —	93,244	0	22
1747 —	51,885	1	1
1748 —	115,727	1	11
1749 —	128,107	2	6
1750 —	107,964	0	22
1751 —	43,769	3	6
1752 —	35,712	2	16
1753 —	55,687	2	6
1744 —	42,818	2	17
1755 —	105,030	0	24
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779,947 1 19
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ability of distinguishing what was really the
 produce of the British colonies, and what
 was clandestinely imported as such, but
 which were in reality either the produce of
 prizes taken in America, or obtained by con-
 traband trade with the French and Dutch
 islands: And by that account it appears,
 that no more than 900,817 cwt. of sugar
 was annually imported upon an average, and
 the average of the export was only 77,994
 cwt. which is a quantity not sufficient for
 the consumption of Ireland only, which
 used to supply the deficiency from Lisbon.
 And it is notorious, that notwithstanding
 the duty of five shillings which formerly was
 charged upon all foreign sugars imported
 into North America, more than half of
 what was consumed there was clandestine-
 ly imported from the French islands. Should
 this be the fact, it is very apparent, that
 however the price of sugar may be reduced
 by the North Americans having permission
 to *use* as well as import foreign sugars, there
 would be no disadvantage to the British em-
 pire in general, as the whole consump-
 tion of the produce of our islands is
 amongst ourselves; and therefore is like

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an inland commerce, which very little affects the public, though the balance may be much more in favour of one part than of the other. But should I be mistaken in my opinion, that a much greater freedom of commerce with the French and Spanish islands than is at present allowed the North Americans, would by no means be injurious to the interest of the British American islands; yet there is an easy means of preventing such inconveniences, if it be apprehended; by obliging all such sugars, coffee, &c. to be re-exported to Great Britain, under such restrictions as shall render them unsaleable but for exportation: and there needs but very little argument to prove, that such permission to the North Americans to bring the commodities of the French and Spanish islands to markets, where our own are seldom or ever sent, can in no wise injure the latter in price; more especially as there is not the least reason to suppose, but that if the subjects of Britain did not bring them to market, other carriers would be found for them, if they could not bring them themselves. The last observation may serve in part for an answer to the other ob-

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jection made by some to this traffick, viz. that unless it was permitted, the French would have great difficulty in vending their produce, or could not cultivate their land, at least to the same advantage as at present, for want of lumber for their casks, and timber for houses, mills, &c. which they would not easily get elsewhere. I should be happy, if I could congratulate my countrymen upon the truth of that observation; but, alas! experience convinces us of the contrary.—The French and Spanish islands are large and fertile, and capable of producing almost every thing they have occasion for: the inhabitants having more valuable commodities to cultivate, are willing to deal with the British colonies for those they cannot obtain, without employing their slaves to a less advantage than they do by purchasing of the North Americans; such, as without they bought them, would be so far from being of advantage to the owners, that they would really become burthensome to them; and it therefore must certainly appear very strange, that we ourselves should lay any obstacles in the way of the North Americans, that may obstruct their exchanging
the

the superfluous part of the produce of their country for sugar, cotton, coffee, indigo, &c. by which we in reality make the latter commodities, in a sort, the produce of North America; and by permitting (if not compelling) the re-exportation of them to foreigners, we not only prevent that commerce from being injurious to our own American islands, but furnish the North Americans with a means of paying for those goods which they purchase of us, for which they have no other way of making remittances. It is the more to be wondered at, that such false notions of commerce should prevail in this instance, when a glaring example of the impropriety of it is before our eyes; it was under the same pretences of supporting our own sugar colonies, and distressing those of France, that English ships were prohibited loading sugars home to England from the French islands, by the very heavy duty which they still are liable to; it was urged, if we did not bring them home, the French could not; but what was the consequence of the experiment? the French merchants either freighted or bought ships from other nations, and we not only lost the

freight, but a nursery for a great number of seamen, which is now a very considerable source of the French naval strength.

I pretend not to say, that the French and Spanish islands do not receive a benefit from this intercourse with the British subjects in North America. I am sure if they do not, there is no reason in the world we should expect they will permit it; for what commerce can long subsist where there is not a mutual benefit arising from it? All we have to consider is, whether, upon the whole, it is more advantageous to us than to forego it intirely. If any disadvantage would result from this commerce to the prejudice of our own sugar colonies, I hope I have proved it would not be from liberty given to the North Americans of importing the articles at present prohibited.

I am not so well convinced of the propriety of their importing foreign molasses; I will therefore state the arguments both for and against, as fairly as in my power, and leave my reader to determine for himself. On the one hand it is urged, ‘ the North Americans have a necessity for that commodity, in order to carry on their trade to the
‘ coast

' coast of Africa, and their fishery on the
 ' coast of New England and the banks of
 ' Newfoundland. With respect to their Af-
 ' rican commerce, it is the sole article
 ' which they carry to the coast, where they
 ' dispose of it to the ships of the different
 ' nations trading there; from which they
 ' receive in payment all the different species
 ' of goods necessary to form a compleat car-
 ' go for trading with the natives; of whom,
 ' having purchased a cargo of slaves, &c.
 ' they return to America, from whence
 ' they remit the produce of their cargo to
 ' Great-Britain. That if they are prevent-
 ' ed importing such foreign molasses, this
 ' branch of their commerce will be entire-
 ' ly lost.

' The use of it in the fishery is after
 ' it is distilled into rum, but it is also brew-
 ' ed into beer, with the assistance of spruce;
 ' which is the common drink of the peo-
 ' ple employed in the fishery, who pay for
 ' it with the refuse of their fish, which are
 ' used by the French and Spaniards for the
 ' provision of their negroes; and which,
 ' unless disposed of to them, would remain
 ' on the hands of the fishermen for want

‘ of other purchasers. It is further alledg-
 ‘ ed that provided the importation of it in-
 ‘ to North-America be not permitted, or a
 ‘ heavy duty be laid upon it, no advantage
 ‘ can result therefrom ; because the fishery
 ‘ at Newfoundland occasions such an in-
 ‘ tercourse between our fishermen and those
 ‘ of France, it will be impossible to prevent
 ‘ our ships from being supplied by those be-
 ‘ longing to the French islands, and that at
 ‘ an advanced price, proportioned to the
 ‘ difficulty they will be put to in obtaining
 ‘ it. — That unless we consent to take
 ‘ molasses in exchange for our lumber and
 ‘ other goods sent to the French islands,
 ‘ they will intirely prohibit the intercourse;
 ‘ and as a proof of that fact it is urged, that
 ‘ the duty of three-pence per gallon, which
 ‘ is now imposed (but very partially col-
 ‘ lected) upon the importation of that arti-
 ‘ cle into North-America, has occasioned
 ‘ a duty of eight shillings per quintal to be
 ‘ imposed in the French islands on all British
 ‘ fish, which is extremely prejudicial to our
 ‘ fishery in America.

‘ Another argument for the liberty of
 ‘ importing this commodity is, that a cargo
 ‘ of

‘ of lumber is of so small value, that the
 ‘ amount of it is not sufficient to purchase a
 ‘ compleat lading of any other articles.’

Allowing the above arguments, it ought to be considered, whether the injury done to the commerce of the British sugar islands does not counterballance the advantages gained by North-America, from the permitting such foreign molasses to be imported and used, without restriction, not only for the purposes for which its utility is acknowledged, but likewise for the consumption of the inhabitants of North-America, and in their trade with the Indians.

It is notorious the French have a much larger share of the sugar trade than ourselves; their islands being much more capacious, must certainly have greater quantities of good land, which consequently may be purchased on easier terms; and the inhabitants being less burthen’d with taxes than those of our islands, may certainly make sugar at a cheaper rate. But as the British sugar colonies have a market for their rum in Europe, and for their rum and molasses in America, they have thereby an advantage which in some measure ballances those the

French enjoy : And every interruption which can be given to the French in the disposal of those articles, tends to put the British sugar planter nearer upon a footing with their rivals than heretofore ; as, unless we purchase them, it is hardly possible they can make any other use of them than in feeding their cattle ; it not being the interest of France to suffer the distillation of molasses into rum, to the prejudice of the consumption of brandy. This therefore is a very strong motive for our discouraging such importation of foreign molasses, particularly as we may expect that a considerable addition to what our own islands used to produce, will in all probability be made in the islands ceded to us by the late treaty of peace. The settlement of which will occasion a great demand for lumber, frames of houses, sugar works, mills, &c. and the canes planted on new land grow so luxuriant as to afford little else but molasses ; it is but reasonable therefore to restrain the North-Americans from trading with foreigners, for any commodities which will particularly interfere with the produce of these new acquisitions.

It

It is also to be considered, whether the taking off the duty of eight shillings per quintal, which the French have laid upon the British fish imported into their islands, will be a consequence of our permitting the free importation of their molasses; because, if not, the duty charged by them upon our fish amounting to a prohibition, I see no way our fishermen can dispose of it but in exchange for the French rum and molasses at sea.—But if, notwithstanding what is before urged, the necessity of the North-Americans, for the supply of their fisheries and their African trade, renders it expedient for them to be permitted the importation of foreign molasses, it will be worth consideration, whether it ought to be charged with the present duty of three-pence per gallon, or indeed with any duty at all. If it be necessary to permit the importation of it, for the sake of the two branches of commerce above mentioned, every impost upon it will in some degree be an injury to them. But there is another reason, which perhaps may appear more conclusive to those who expect to raise money by the duty: it is, that when any tax is laid upon a commodity

nearly

nearly equal to the present, which is fifty per cent. upon the prime cost, it is such a temptation, that even in England there is the utmost difficulty, nay, an absolute impossibility, totally to prevent smuggling, although the number of supervisors, tide and land waiters, riding officers, &c. are almost as numerous as the traders: What chance is there then of collecting so heavy a duty in a country like America, where not more than a dozen officers are appointed to superintend and guard the commerce of that coast, from Cape Charles to Rhode island? If therefore there be a propriety in laying any tax upon the importation of this commodity, it ought not to be so heavy as to lay the trader under any temptation to engage in a clandestine commerce. One-penny per gallon is certainly as much as it ought to be charged with; and I will venture to foretell, without the spirit of prophecy, that it will produce a much more considerable sum, than what has been collected under the present duty.

I own however, that I should think the northern colonies would be extremely benefitted, if the consumption of the rum distilled

led from such molasses could be restrained to the purposes for which they are allowed to be necessary, as the use of it amongst themselves is become so immoderate as to call aloud for some restriction; and with respect to their commerce with the Indians, the want of it may be supplied, as usefully at least, by spirit distilled from their corn, to say nothing of the produce of their vines, provided they would be induced to cultivate them.—If there is a practicability of restraining the use of such rum to the purposes of commerce, it will most certainly very considerably lessen the demand for it, and will, in some measure, answer the purpose of distressing the French sugar planter. In hopes an expedient will be found for this purpose, it will be necessary to examine the remaining reasons urged for an unlimited permission to import the article in question, viz. that a cargo of lumber is of so small value, molasses is the only lading they can purchase in return; and unless they are allowed to receive that, they must come back dead freighted. The other is, that unless they agree to receive molasses in payment, the French, &c. will not purchase their commodities at all.

all. The first objection I hope will, in a great measure, be obviated, if they have liberty of loading those commodities on board, which are not at present in their power to do ; as there appears to me no reason whatever (provided my principle is a good one) why they may not purchase with cash, or bills of Exchange, sufficient to complete their lading of the more valuable commodities, provided the purchase so to be made be not at a higher price than it ought to be, to leave the purchaser a freight for his profit; because, if such commodities are obliged to be re-exported, the cash will be again sent back into the kingdom, with an addition of all that shall be gained by the carriage of them. Indeed I do not see why such ships may not be permitted to proceed directly with their cargoes to Great-Britain,* where such part of them as they shall not be allowed to dispose of may be landed for exportation, and put under the king's locks, and each particular package be made its own warehouse, as is at present, the case with respect to tobaccos. Bond may also be given for re-exportation within a limited time,

* Though there is no law to prevent their importation into Great-Britain, yet there is so heavy a duty paid at landing as renders it impracticable. Vide p. 16.

upon pain of paying such duty as shall be thought proper, which will be expressed in the bond. This would effectually prevent a possibility of its interfering with the produce of our own islands.

The other objection seems at first sight to have greater weight; for to be sure, if the getting a market for their molasses is the only advantage resulting to the French and Spanish islands in the West Indies, from their intercourse with the North Americans, they would be much to blame to permit it on any other terms. But they certainly receive other benefits, which render the commerce desirable to them; though, perhaps, the ballance would be rather in favour of the North Americans, as they have no other market for the goods they dispose of there. It may, however, with propriety be said, in a commerce where no cash passes in payment of a ballance, but the whole is carried on by way of barter, that the trade is mutually advantageous. For although it be allowed the French islanders have provisions and lumber sufficient for the maintenance of their people, and the supply of their necessities, yet the North Americans can afford to sell these commodities

dities to them for much less than they can afford to raise them at ; or, to explain myself more clearly, one slave employed in producing sugar, cotton, cacao or indico, will be able to produce enough of such articles to purchase a much greater quantity of those the North Americans carry to them, than his labour could procure, and, whatever the difference is, will be gain to them ; so that there is no reason to dread a suppression of that trade, unless it be from an imagination that they can thereby induce you to trade with them upon their own terms. And, as a farther proof that such trade will be connived at (if not permitted) the Dutch, from St. Eustatia and Curaçoa, trade with the French islands for sugar, indico, &c. for which they give North American produce in exchange. And the opulence of the inhabitants of those barren Dutch islands, shew they carry on the trade to advantage, although they first purchase those very commodities of our Northern colonists themselves, and consequently trade under the disadvantage of a double freight, which in such bulky articles is of vast importance. I do not pretend to say the commerce carried

ried on by the Dutch is altogether allowed of; but if they can carry on such a clandestine trade, cannot we do the same? and the North Americans will deserve much less reproach for carrying on a contraband trade with foreigners, to the emolument of the whole nation, than for smuggling upon their own coasts, to the manifest injury of Great Britain. After what I have said, I leave it to better judgments, whether any, and what restriction ought to be laid on the importation of foreign molasses into North America: but, whatever may be determined on that head, it is certain, that the trade of the N. Americans have, in other instances, been exceedingly interrupted by the restrictions it has lain under from the late regulations; and I am apt to believe the difficulties we have put them to, have produced no one advantage, either to Great Britain or its revenues, while the inconvenience they have felt, has ill disposed their minds towards us, and, in a great measure, been the source of their late misbehaviour. As I have so freely given my opinion upon this subject, it may perhaps be imagined, I mean to reflect upon

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on the gentleman principally concerned in forming the regulations complained of, I should be extremely sorry, if that was the case ; on the contrary, I profess myself to have a very high opinion both of his abilities and integrity ; and I consider the late regulations, as the *suite* of a system that has been long adopted, for the government of the colonies ; and the inconveniencies now complained of are not so great as they have heretofore sustained, with a most admirable patience. I could give a variety of instances, but a few may suffice : in the late war, when North America was blest with the most plentiful harvests ever known there, a general was empowered to lay an embargo on provisions all over the continent, which prevented the exportation of such a quantity of corn, that, I speak within compass when I say, as much was destroyed by vermin as would have brought the owners upwards of 500,000 l. sterling ; nor was this the only ill consequence resulting from this injudicious and ill-timed step ; for the vast quantities of corn, obliged thereby to be stored, bred such a multitude of those ver-

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min as destroyed great part of their succeeding crop; and years elapsed before the inhabitants of Maryland, and the southern parts of Pennsylvania were, freed from that particular kind, called the wolfe; and it is to be observed, that this kind of fly was not known before that period, in any part of the continent north of South Carolina. Since then no want of corn in Great Britain has ever occasioned a particular permission in favour of the colonies to import it; but they have only been allowed such permission in common with other nations, whose proximity have given them an opportunity to reap the advantage, to the utter exclusion of the colonies, except in one instance*, although thereby a considerable sum is carried out of the kingdom; when, if the colonies alone were allowed to send corn to us when we wanted it, it would be sent in payment of part of the debt they owe us.

The tobacco colonies have suffered much from the heavy duty laid upon their produce, which has vastly lessened its con-

* The year 1758; when there was no corn in Europe.

sumption, and the consequence will soon be severely felt, in the loss the revenue will thereby sustain. Every body must remember when that article was given gratis by the publicans to their customers, which prodigiously encouraged the consumption, as it was generally called for; and, if very little of it used, was probably destroyed; now, amongst the common people, whoever takes tobacco, generally carries it in his own box: multitudes have left off taking it; and, as it is notoriously nauseous at first, it will probably be more disused, especially as it is in a sort banished polite company; and even in the form of snuff, is not half so much made use of as heretofore. It is not indeed to be supposed people, even of the middling rank, will deprive themselves of any gratification, of the kind I mention, from the consideration of the increase of its price, which to be sure is very trifling, when put in competition with what use has in some measure made, if not a necessary, an amusement, we should not willingly be deprived of: but it is not so with the lower people; if they find the price advance upon them, they

they must content themselves with a less quantity ; and, finding that expensive, they will endeavour to prevent their children accustoming themselves to the use of it, which they will the readier do, as they will not be induced to it from the ridiculous, though constant practice of aping their superiors.

The tobacco planters would not however have reason to complain, provided the imposts charged upon that commodity were proportionable to what was paid by others ; but the contrary is so much the case, that when a duty is laid, *ad valorem*, upon dry goods, that article, by being rated at ten times * more than its value, pays ten times more in proportion than any other goods which are taxed at the same time.

Another hardship which the colonists have long complained of likewise, and which is not only an injury to them, but to Great Britain, is, that many species of goods which are intended for exportation (even tobacco, which is put under the king's

* Tobacco, though upon an average it is not worth more than two-pence per pound, is rated at twenty-pence per pound.

locks) and bond given for that purpose, are obliged to pay the old subsidy, or perhaps other duties upon the landing of them,* without which they cannot be carried to the market they are intended; by which means the merchant is not only disabled from giving his correspondent a larger credit, or extending his correspondence, by being forced to keep a large part of his capital unemployed, for the purpose of making such deposit, but is obliged to export such goods immediately, in order to get the sum of money thereby locked up at liberty again, although such immediate exportation may be a means of glutting the market they are sent to, and loses to the nation a considerable sum in warehouse rent, which we pay to Holland, Hamburg and other places. I could give many other instances of the like kind, but hope the foregoing will be sufficient to shew the necessity of an inspection into, and alteration of such particular laws, as shall be found injurious to the commercial interests of Great Britain; and at the same time my mentioning them will shew,

* Particular foreign sugars, which are liable to a duty of 11. 17s. 6d. per C. upon importation.

that I do not mean to blame any particular man, or set of men, for the late regulations; but that my arguments are levelled at the system which has been invariably pursued by every set of ministers for a great length of time. Nor have I the least doubt, but if any plan had been proposed to them, for the advantage of the colonies, consistent with the good of the whole British empire, but they would have readily put it in execution, of which the many bounties, and other encouragement, given to the colonies from time to time, are sufficient evidence.

I have still a further view in pointing out the oppression the commerce of North America has for a long time lain under; to shew, that though the stamp-duty has been the ostensible cause of the late riots and disturbances in that country, yet that, in reality, is but a small part of their grievance; and, however warm and heated imaginations may call the occurrences in America by the name of insurrections or rebellion, yet, I hope, no sober-thinking man will consider what has passed there, as the act of the people of America in general. I doubt not there is a general repug-

nance to the tax, but am sure the opposition to it, which will be made by the colonies, will be such as is consistent with that obedience and attachment they have always shewn to their King and their fellow subjects in Great Britain. If any individuals have committed outrages, let them be punished; but let that kind of mercy temper justice, which always ought to be shewn to persons who are mistaken. Many gentlemen of great abilities in North America have thought the colonists, by their charters, or for other reasons, exempt from internal taxes, imposed on them by any other authority than that of their own assemblies. Persons acting under such a supposition may be allowed to plead it in extenuation of crimes, which might otherwise, with more propriety, be called by the harsh epithets which some have given them. As I am not a judge myself of the claim made by the colonists to such exemption, and it is now to be considered by the highest authority of the kingdom, I shall decline giving my opinion, and only endeavour to shew, that though there may neither be an im-

propriety

propriety in Great Britain's imposing internal taxes upon the colonies, or inability in the inhabitants to pay the taxes imposed, it deserves the utmost attention on our part, that their share of the burthen may be proportioned to their strength, and so disposed, as to render the remainder easier to be born by us. If they are injudiciously taxed, the consequence will be fatal in proportion to the amount of the sum raised; and every tax seems to be an improper one, which shall tend to take bullion from the North American colonies. I do not pretend to say, that the North Americans ought, from their poverty, to be exempt from bearing a proportion of taxes; for they are not poor, their riches are however of the patriarchal sort; they have large tracts of land, and "flocks and herds, even much cattle," but they have no silver and gold; at least what little they have is not sufficient for their most necessary purposes; and a paper currency has been substituted in their stead, by which means they are enabled, when their industry procures them a small addition, to ship it home in payment of part of their debts due to the merchants of Great Bri-

tain, with whom they deal annually for more than the amount of their whole produce; nor have they been hitherto able to procure, from their commerce with other nations, sufficient to pay the overplus, but, on the contrary, are at present much in arrear, several millions being computed to be now due from North America to these kingdoms. It is therefore evident, that if we raise any money upon the colonies, it will be much to the disadvantage of the inhabitants of Great Britain. We at present have their all, and can we have more? Nor will such tax (be it what it will) at all increase the revenue. Suppose, for instance, the sum of 20,000*l.* sterling, levied on the inhabitants of Virginia and Maryland, they must of consequence take so much less of your manufactures as would amount to that sum, and must also employ so many hands in making such as they would not receive from you as will enable them to make good that deficiency, by which means the revenue will lose at least as much by its decrease in another branch as the 20,000*l.* amounts to.—But let us examine this matter a little more attentively. The labour of
a negro

a negro in the tobacco colonies is worth about 5l. sterling; or say he can maintain himself in food, and make the value of 15cwt. of tobacco. Thus it will require the labour of 4000 men to raise the sum required to be levied. The consequence of this sum raised and paid to government will be, that the planters will be disabled from remitting so much to the merchants, to whom they are in debt in England, who will thereby be prevented from sending them cloathing, and other manufactures to the same amount, the want of which will necessarily oblige them to employ other of their slaves in manufactures, the number of which I will suppose to be only half of those who were employed to pay the tax, as I compute the annual expence of cloathing for a negro, plantation utensils, &c. exported from Great Britain, to amount to about 2l. 10s.—Two thousand people being thus employed in making British manufactures, will naturally occasion the growth of tobacco to be less by 3000 hhds than it would otherwise be, and consequently so much less will be imported into Great Britain,

It is supposed Great Britain consumes about one-fourth of all the tobacco grown in the British colonies; and the duty upon an hogshead of tobacco, for home consumption, amounts, upon an average, to upwards of 25 l. sterling, which upon 750, being the fourth part of 3000 hogsheads, amounts to 18,750 l. to say nothing of the loss to the revenue in the branches of beer, soap, candles, &c. which would have been consumed by the British manufactures in making the goods which the sum of money raised by the tax would have paid for.

At the same time I consider the disadvantage resulting from an attempt to raise money on the North Americans, I can't help lamenting the apparent inconsistency such a step shews in the councils of Great Britain, which cannot fail of reflecting great dishonour upon them. It is but a very short time since the legislative power of these kingdoms gave the most public proofs of their sentiments with respect to the inability of the inhabitants of North America to pay taxes, by sending them a considerable sum of money, in order to pay the necessary expences incurred by them in the
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late war. This money was sent when they were much more able to sustain any burthen of that kind than they have ever been since. And there can be no doubt that inability will not be removed by the restrictions their commerce has lately been laid under. What then must have been their surprize! when they found the public opinion so soon changed as to require back not only the money so sent them, but a much greater annual sum?

I have already shewn, in the instance of tobacco, how little it will assist the revenue to lay taxes upon a people who have nothing but labour to pay you with, and which they have already mortgaged to you for many years to come: and though perhaps it may be said, that tobacco is the only article which the truth of my assertion can be demonstrated from, yet that alone will evince the impropriety of raising money upon the colonies, as it cannot be doubted but it will operate in the same *manner* upon every other article, though perhaps not in the same *degree*. I own, if money is to be raised upon the colonies at all, I am ready to acknowledge the propriety of that sort of tax
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which has been lately imposed in preference to any other, as it least affects the persons of the least property. But at the same time I acknowledge a stamp duty to be a tax which is less felt than almost any other, yet I cannot help expressing my sincere wish the late act of parliament may be repealed, as I am convinced it will never answer the intent for which it was passed; nor is there a practicability of carrying it into execution in many parts of North America, even if no opposition should be made to it. If the stamps are to be paid for in specie, the inhabitants of the provinces of North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland, are in a deplorable situation, for I believe 1000*l.* sterling cannot be found in all the three. If in paper currency, what can be the advantage resulting from the receipt of it? when such currency is of no use beyond the limits of the province in which it shall have been respectively passed.

As I have asserted the impropriety of raising *money* upon the North Americans, and at the same time acknowledged the expediency of their contributing towards the support of the government of Great Britain

tain, it may be looked upon as a kind of paradox, but I hope to explain myself satisfactorily.

Without entering into a critical disquisition, how, and in what manner, and for what purpose, government was first instituted amongst mankind, it will not, I believe, be doubted, but that wherever the supreme power has been lodged (whether in one or many) the inhabitants of each nation have held their possession by a kind feudal tenure, and for many centuries, all the taxes paid, or services performed, were in kind; and it is but of late years that money has been made use of amongst us as a kind of universal medium, either for rent, taxes, or the common services performed by feudal tenants. It therefore involves no absurdity in it to propose a tax upon the North Americans upon that footing. And though they cannot, without great prejudice both to themselves and Great Britain, pay a tax in money, yet they will not be injured, or indeed oppressed, by being obliged to pay a tax in such kind of commodities as will be beneficial to Great Britain, at the same time it is of advantage

to themselves. I flatter myself also, that the charge, of innovation, or novelty, will not be against me, when it is considered, that the Windward islands have long since adopted this plan, and actually at present pay a duty of 4 1-half *per cent.* of all their sugars to the King, which sugars are shipped home, and disposed of by the Commissioners of the Customs.—Nor does any ill consequence seem to have ever resulted, or to be apprehended from that method. Indeed the fact is, that almost all the parochial and other taxes, for the support of the internal police of the several governments in America, have been collected in produce; in many provinces the custom still continues; and many merchants, now living in London, must remember, that not many years ago all commerce was carried on by way of barter, and the price of one species of goods regulated by another, instead of by money: there cannot therefore be any objection to laying such a tax upon the colonies, and I hope it may be done so as not to be burthensome to them, while it may be highly beneficial to us.—If the expediency

cy of such a tax be approved, I need take very little pains to point out what are the kinds of produce the Americans ought to pay it in, every one will be ready to mention hemp and flax, as the articles most wanted by us, and which will be soonest raised and brought to perfection in the colonies ; and I believe there is not a district on the whole continent where great quantities of ground cannot easily be found fit for the purposes of one or both these valuable materials ; but that such tax may not be oppressive to the inhabitants, or by any means distress them in their circumstances, which would prevent their increase, and be therefore productive of consequences infinitely more disadvantageous than would be ballanced by any immediate increase of the revenue, I would propose, whatever quantity they are obliged to furnish shall be paid for at a fixed price. But to explain myself more at large, I would propose that, in lieu of the present stamp-duties, a tax should be laid upon every white man, of the age of sixteen to fifty, and upon every black man or woman of the same ages ; or in other words, upon every tithable

titiable person of * 28lb. or one quarter of a hundred of clean well dressed merchantable hemp or flax; to be collected by the sheriff or proper officers in each parish, (in the same manner as the public dues are in Maryland), which should once or twice in a year be brought in the king's warehouses, and there delivered to the collector of his Majesty's customs for the port or district which shall be appointed for that purpose; thence to be shipped to Great-Britain, to the consignment of the commissioners of the navy for his Majesty's use. Upon the first collection of this duty, by the sheriff or parish officers, I would propose, that receipts should be given for the amount of the quantity of hemp or flax delivered by each person, such receipts to pass in payment at the rate of 20s. current money, for every 1 cwt. mentioned therein to be received; and which receipts, being carried to the collector of the customs, after the hemp and flax shall have been delivered to him as

* An acre of tolerable ground will produce from four hundred to seven hundred and an half of hemp or flax, besides the seed; and one negroe will more than tend five acres of land; so that one quarter of a hundred is no very considerable part of a man's labour.

above.

abovementioned, shall by him be received, and bills upon the treasurer of the navy given in their stead, at the rate of, one hundred thirty-three, pounds six shillings and eight-pence sterling, payable within a limited time in Great-Britain, so as to prevent the government being in any actual advance for the said commodities; which, if they should not be wanted for the use of the navy, might be sold by a public sale in the same manner the four one-half per cent. sugars now are sold by the commissioners of the customs.

I apprehend, that the price above-mentioned will on the one hand be thought fully sufficient as on the other. I am fully convinced, the crown would gain sufficiently, even after deducting the expences of package, freight, warehouses, &c. * And I apprehend the utility of this plan is too apparent to need any comment. The payment for it in those kinds of negociable receipts will supply the place of a paper currency, which will have a permanent and

* Perhaps it may not be thought improper in times of peace, that the King's ships in the American station might annually return to Great Britain, armed *en flute*, with the hemp and flax on board, which would be a further saving to the nation.

intrinsic value, and which, being every year renewed, will continue to augment the riches of the country in proportion as the number of inhabitants shall increase, and supply them with a new staple commodity, for a great part of which they will be sure of a market at home, and are thereby furnished with a new means of making remittances to Great Britain.

It is not my intention to form a plan for this kind of tax which shall not be liable to objections, I only mean to trace the outlines ; nor do I, by mentioning the articles of hemp and flax, pretend to say, there may not be other articles which may in some parts be substituted to greater advantage in their stead, as silk, cotton, &c. but I have mentioned hemp and flax as the primary objects of our regard, not more on account of their utility, than with respect to the ease and facility with which they may be cultivated in every part of N. America ; and I should apprehend, that the advantages to our fellow subjects in that part of the world will, by this mode of taxation (if such a name may with propriety be applied to it) be as great as to the inhabitants of Great Britain, as it
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not only brings a market home to their doors, which will supply them with a paper currency of equal value with Exchequer bills, but also encourages so useful a mode of cultivation, as, while it tends to enrich them, insures to the mother country the means of fitting out a fleet whenever the interests of any part of the British empire demand that exertion of our strength, when we may otherwise be prevented from doing it at a time of our greatest necessity.

F I N I S.

